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FUEL ELECTRODE FOR SOLID ELETROLYTE FUEL CELL

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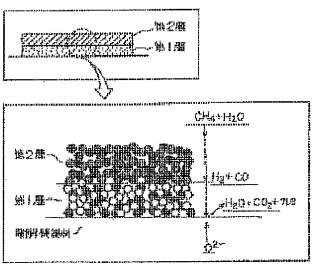
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Abstract of JP 5067472 (A)

PURPOSE: To prevent degradation of fuel cell performance by forming two porous electrode layers of both a<n> Ni+YSZ constitution and a Ni+basic aggregate constitution on the surface of an electrolytic base material. CONSTITUTION: The first porous electrode layer of a<n> Ni+YSZ constitution and the second porous electrode layer of a<n> Ni+basic aggregate constitution are formed on the surface of an electrolyte base material. An electrode reaction function is given to the first layer, and a reforming catalyst function of carbon proof deposition property is given to the second layer, and hydrocarbon is prevented from coming into contact directly with the first layer by adopting an electrode structure, and electrode reaction is highly activated between quasi reforming hydrogen and oxygen ion, so that degradation of fuel cell performance can be prevented.



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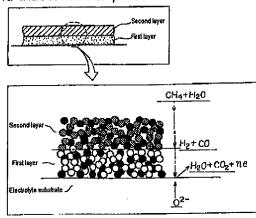
54 Title of the invention

Fuel Electrode for Solid Electrolyte Fuel Cell

57 Abstract

Objective To provide a fuel electrode for a solid electrolyte fuel cell which prevents direct contact by hydrocarbons with the reaction active layer of the fuel electrode and highly activates the electrode reactions between quasi-reformed hydrogen and oxygen ions, that is able to reduce the S/C ratio and that is able to prevent deterioration in the performance of the fuel electrode

Constitution A fuel electrode for a solid electrolyte fuel cell characterized in that a first porous electrode layer that contains yttria stabilized zirconia aggregate and particle of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of a solid electrolyte substrate, and in that a second porous electrode layer that contains basic aggregate and particles of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of the first porous electrode layer



● : Ni_O : YSZ, S : Basic aggregate

Claims

Claim 1 A fuel electrode for a solid electrolyte fuel cell characterized in that a first porous electrode layer that contains yttria-stabilized zirconia aggregate and particle of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of a solid electrolyte substrate, and in that a second porous electrode layer that contains basic aggregate and particles of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of the first porous electrode layer

Claim 2 A fuel electrode for a solid electrolyte fuel cell as in Claim 1, further characterized in that one or a plurality of aggregates selected from MgAl₂O₄, CaAl₂O₄,

MgO·2TiO₂, MgO·ZrO₂ and CeO₂ are used as the basic substrate that forms the second porous electrode layer

Detailed description of the invention

0001

Relevant area of industry

This invention relates to fuel electrodes for fuel cells, and more particularly to high temperature solid electrolyte fuel cells (solid oxide fuel cells, hereinafter referred to as 'SOFC') that use coal gasification gas and natural gas as primary fuels.

0002

Prior art

As the example illustrated in Figure 12 shows, an SOFC is composed of a solid electrolyte material 2 that is encased in an air electrode 1 and a fuel electrode 4. 3 is an intermediate interconnector and 5 is a porous tabular or tubular substrate. Stabilized zirconia with 8 mol% of Y₂O₃ in solid solution (hereinafter referred to as 'YSZ') which is conductive for oxygen ions is widely employed as the solid electrolyte material 2. A perovskite type complex oxide that is stable in high temperature oxidizing atmospheres and that is highly electrically conductive is used for the air electrode 1, and a mixed nickel and YSZ cermet for thermal compatibility with nickel and YSZ is used for the fuel electrode 4. La-Cr based perovskite oxides are typically employed for the intermediate interconnector 3. Such cells function at approximately 1000° C, with air or oxygen being supplied to the air electrode side and hydrogen being supplied to the fuel electrode side.

0003

The fuel supplied to fuel cells is principally hydrogen, but as fuel cells have become larger, coal gasification gas and natural gas, and also hydrogen produced from the hydrogen reformation of naphtha have been used. Two methods are employed for the production of hydrogen from natural gas and so forth: the external reformation process in which hydrogen that has been reformed outside the fuel cell is supplied, and the internal reformation process in which hydrogen is reformed directly inside the fuel cell and electricity is generated. The internal reformation process is particularly suited to high temperature fuel cells, and possesses the following characteristics.

- (1) Small size of plant
- (2) High efficiency of hydrogen production using heat from the fuel cell
- (3) Reduction in cell cooling load capacity due to the endothermic effects of the reforming reaction
- (4) Greater efficiency of electricity generation plant (compared with external reformation)

0004

However, the fuel electrode chamber which forms the fuel channel for the fuel cell is composed principally of the fuel electrode and the connecting material such as the interconnector and so forth. The fuel electrode material consists of Ni metal cermet and YSZ aggregate in order to maintain compatibility with the thermal expansion rate of the electrolyte (YSZ), with the Ni component of the cermet generally being between 30 vol% and 50 vol%. Fuel cell electrolyte materials for fuel cells that consist of Ni and YSZ compositions are known, but no other practical examples apart from these exist at present.

Problems to be solved by the invention

The entire cell reaction in a fuel cell proceeds in the following manner through the movement of the oxygen ions in the electrolyte:

Oxygen pole:

 $O_2(g) + 2e = O^2$

Fuel pole:

 $H_2(g) + O^2 = H_2O + 2e$

Entire reaction:

 $H_2(g) + O_2(g) = H_2O(g)$

(Where, e is electron and g is gas)

Hydrogen and oxygen are the active materials in the fuel cell. The oxygen pole side presents no particular problems because it is able to use the oxygen in the air. The fuel pole side also presents no particular problem if it is supplied with pure hydrogen that has been produced by the hydrogen production process described above.

0006

However, as fuel cells become larger, and actual fuels such as coal gas gasification gas and natural gas or town gas are used directly as fuels, the impurities contained in the hydrogen fuel, such as CH₄ and other light hydrocarbons as well as SOx cause problems with the poisoning of the fuel electrode materials. In particular, when hydrocarbons such as natural gas and so forth are reformed directly and electricity is generated as in the internal reforming process, the residual CH₄ which is a component of the fuel causes deterioration of the fuel electrode material. This is due principally to the deposition of carbon in the fuel electrode.

0007

Ni catalysts on carriers of heat-resistant αAl_2O_3 and cordierite (2MgO·2Al $_2O_3$ ·5SiO $_2$) have hitherto been known as hydrogen gas reformation catalysts for light hydrocarbons such as CH $_4$, and industrially practical catalysts in which basic alkaline and alkaline earth metals such as K $_2O$ and MgO and so forth and Ru metal are added in order to prevent the deposition of carbon are employed. A further approach to preventing carbon deposits is by thermodynamic manipulation of the operation, by increasing the S/C ratio (steam/carbon molar ratio) or the CO $_2$ /C ratio, causing the amount of steam supplied to further exceed the stoichiometric ratios.

8000

While the use of Ni metal as the active component of the catalysts for fuel electrode materials does not cause any particular problems as regards the reforming function in fuel cell, when acidic YSZ is used in the aggregate for the electrolyte carrier, carbon is relatively readily generated which has a serious impact on the service life of the fuel cell. The following problems exist with the solutions found hitherto to dealing with carbon deposits in fuel cells, and these solutions are subject to severe limitations.

- (1) Thermal compatibility cannot be maintained with the addition of additives and the carriers of the prior art.
- (2) Such carriers and additives cannot withstand high temperature environments of not less than 1000° C and solid solution reactions with the adjoining substrate form by-product impurities.
- (3) Increasing the S/C ratio leads to decreases in the thermal efficiency and output of the cell due to loss of latent heat from the excess steam and reduction in the concentration of active substances in the cell.

0009

Consequently the following measures must be taken in order to prevent deterioration in the fuel cell materials in the internal reform process in particular, as the size of fuel cells is increased.

- (1) Thermal stability and compatibility of thermal expansion rates with the adjoining substrate, and particularly the electrolyte (YSZ)
- (2) Resistance to solid solution reactions with the adjoining substrate, particularly the YSZ, interconnector and Ni
- (3) High power collection performance
- (4) High activity and resistance to carbon deposition of the hydrogen gas reforming catalyst
- (5) Low C/S ratio (→ 1 to 2)
- (6) High fuel electrode performance (reduction in overvoltage)

0010

The inventors of the present invention proposed in Japanese Patent Application No. 3-41855 proposed electrode materials for fuel cells, such electrode materials containing spinel compounds such as MgAl₂O₄ and CaAl₂O₄, which exhibit low thermal expansion and that are basic, as a solution to these problems. Thus in the fuel electrode material consisting of a composition of Ni metal particles and the aforementioned basic aggregate, the aggregate exhibits a lower thermal expansion ratio than YSZ which cancelled out the thermal expansion ratio (13.9 x 10⁻⁶ ° C⁻¹) of NiO (nickel oxides are usually formed when electrodes are manufactured) and it was possible to match the thermal expansion ratio of the electrolyte YSZ. Moreover, the aforementioned spinel compounds being basic exhibited excellent resistance to carbon deposits and are able to maintain consistent hydrogen reforming catalytic activity and electrochemical catalytic action even at low S/C ratios. Furthermore, Japanese Patent Application No. 2-238999 proposed similar electrode materials, with CeO₂ being employed as the electrode aggregate.

0011

However, an important discovery was made during the process of evaluating the performance of the electrodes with such electrode material. Thus, the electrode materials of the prior art that are composed of Ni metal and YSZ aggregate act very effectively in the fuel cell reaction ($H_2 + O^{2-} = H_2O + 2e$) which is the elementary step in the cell reaction, but the electrode performance of aggregates other than YSZ, and in particular that of aggregates that are substantially close to insulators, tended to be rather poorer than the performance of the aggregates of the prior art. Thus the present invention is intended to provide fuel electrodes for solid electrolyte type fuel cells that meet the requirements described above for the prevention of deterioration while maintaining the existing electrode performance.

0012

Means employed in order to solve the problems

Thus the present invention is a fuel electrode for a solid electrolyte fuel cell characterized in that a first porous electrode layer that contains yttria-stabilized zirconia aggregate and particle of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of a solid electrolyte substrate, and in that a second porous electrode layer that contains basic aggregate and particles of nickel or oxides thereof is formed on the surface of the first porous electrode layer.

0013

On the basis of this discovery, the inventors of the present invention conducted research into electrode materials that would meet the aforementioned requirement for preventing deterioration and discovered that composite oxides of MgO-2TiO₂ and MgO-ZrO₂ were also effective as basic aggregates with thermal expansion ratios

equivalent to that of YSZ. Consequently, one or a plurality of aggregates selected from the group consisting of MgAl₂O₄, CaAl₂O₄, MgO·2TiO₂, MgO·ZrO₂ and CeO₂ may be used as the basic substrate that forms the second porous electrode layer.

0014

Action

Figure 1 is a schematic drawing showing an expanded cross section of a fuel electrode which is a practical embodiment of the present invention. Such fuel electrode is composed of a first porous electrolyte layer with a (Ni + YSZ) structure on the surface of the electrolyte substrate and a second porous electrolyte layer with a (Ni + basic aggregate) structure, the first porous electrolyte layer possessing an electrode reaction function and the second porous electrolyte layer possessing a carbon deposit resistant reforming catalytic function, and the use of this electrode structure prevents the direct catalysis of the hydrocarbons by the first porous electrolyte layer, increases the activity of the electrode reaction between the quasi-reformed hydrogen and the oxygen ions, and is able to prevent deterioration of the fuel cell performance and the fuel electrode performance.

0015

The present invention uses fuel electrode aggregate possessing a thermal expansion ratio equivalent to that of electrolyte YSZ (10 x 10⁻⁶ ° C⁻¹) or lower whereby it is possible to include NiO therein to the extent of the prior art or to a greater extent, and as a result, it is possible to adequately match the thermal expansion ratio to that of the electrolyte and there is virtually no load due to thermal stress. Moreover, at temperatures of between 1000° C and 1500° C, a thermodynamically stable electrode material is provided with no deposits of impurities due to solid solution reactions with the adjoining substrate being detected, and hence there is no problem whatsoever in the production of fuel cells that require high temperature treatment. The Ni which forms the conducting medium possesses electricity collection properties equal or superior to those of the prior art and hence possesses good metallic electric conducting properties.¹ Hence the material properties of the fuel cells envisaged by the present invention are equal or superior to those of the prior art and do not present any particular impediment to the design of fuel cells.

0016

The most particular action of the present invention is the maintenance of resistance to the deposition of carbon and the high performance of the fuel electrolyte in the internal reforming reactions when operated with a low S/C ratio as below. The internal reforming reactions in the fuel cell proceed as below in the fuel electrode chamber. In this case, the primary fuel is CH₄ but the final reaction process is similar in hydrocarbons that possess two or more carbons. Reforming reactions

$$CH_4 + H_2O \rightarrow CO + 3H_2$$
 (1)
 $CO + H_2O \rightarrow CO_2 + H_2$ (2)

Electrode reactions

$$H_2 + O^{2-} \rightarrow H_2O + 2e$$
 (3)
CO + O²⁻ \rightarrow CO₂ + 2e (4)

0017

¹ The original Japanese sentence appears to be defective - Translator

Parra 6

In the internal reforming reactions in such fuel cells, the reforming reactions (1) and (2) and the electrode reactions (3) and (4) occur successively, with reactions (1) and (2) being essentially no different from the normal hydrogen gas reforming reactions. Consequently, carbon is also formed by the same mechanisms as on ordinary reforming catalysts and this is displaced to the fuel electrode only. The principal mechanisms leading to the formation of carbon are the contact cracking of the hydrocarbons and the dismutation reaction of CO. The contact cracking of hydrocarbons in particular occurs most readily at high temperatures of 1000° C. Such contact cracking occurs principally as a result of the process of the dehydrogenation of the CHx that is strongly adsorbed to the surface of the Ni metal. The greater is the value of the x (<4) in the CHx, the greater is the reactivity of the steam and the shift to reforming of formula (1) with the result that no carbon is formed, whereas carbon is formed more readily when the value of x is low. Moreover, the carbon formation process is further promoted when an acidic aggregate such as YSZ is adjacent to the Ni metal. However, when a basic aggregate is introduced in the present invention, the electron supply action from the basic aggregate to the Ni metal moderates the dehydrogenation reaction of the CHx and renders the steam more active, with the result that the formation of carbon is restricted.

0018

On the other hand, of the fuel electrode reactions (3) and (4), the reaction of (3) is particularly determining. The active reaction site is adjacent to the boundary surfaces of the three phases, gas phase/Ni/YSZ and consequently the interval in the three phase boundary surfaces should be in either the electrode/electrolyte or electrode film thickness directions. This demonstrates that the electrode materials of the prior art that were composed of Ni metal and YSZ aggregate are highly effective in the electrode reaction. When the electrode materials envisaged by the present invention are used alone, the active reaction site is restricted to the two-dimensional region at the boundary surface between the electrode and the electrolyte, and the active reaction point is somewhat smaller than that of the prior art. Hence ...² is of course advantageous in ensuring the separation of the boundary surfaces of the three phases, and is able to maintain electrode performance as in the prior art.

0019

Thus in the fuel electrodes envisaged by the present invention, a second porous electrode layer that possesses a reforming catalytic function that resists the deposition of carbon is formed upon a first porous electrode layer that possesses an electrode reaction function, which prevents the hydrocarbons from coming into contact with the first porous electrode layer while rendering the electrode reaction in that layer highly active and preventing deterioration of the fuel electrode.

0020

Practical Embodiments

Manufacture of fuel electrodes

The following describes an example of the method of manufacture of the fuel electrodes that were provided for the practical embodiments. NiO was used for the Ni source and YSZ (8 mol% Y_2O_3 -ZrO₂), MgAl₂O₄, CaAl₂O₄, MgO·2TiO₂ and MgO·ZrO₂ powders were used as the aggregate as the starting materials. The diameter of these raw materials was generally within the range 0.1 μ m to 2 μ m. The MgO·ZrO₂ was a solid solution,

² Part of sentence in Japanese is defective: meaning unclear - Translator

with the MgO forming a maximum of 20 mol% of the solid solution. First, the powdered NiO and aggregate raw materials and a polyacrylic dispersing agent were blended together in the desired proportions, and were then mixed and dispersed in a wet ball mill to yield a uniform slurry.

0021

In order to evaluate the physical properties of the material, this slurry was thoroughly dried and was screened to 100 μ m to 150 μ m; an organic binder was added to this and it was pressure moulded (or cold isostatic pressed (CIP)) and was then sintered at 1300° C to 1400° C for the desired time. The amount of binder added, the raw material particle size and the sinter temperature and time were varied to restrict the porosity and pore diameter of the sinter cake to 10% to 20% and not more than 1 μ m respectively in order to simulate compositions of the porous electrode. Because NiO is reduced in fuel gas atmospheres consisting of hydrogen or CH₄, the porosity and pore diameter of the final sinter cake were increased to 20% to 30% and 1 μ m to 2 μ m respectively. This was similar to the conditions used in the manufacture of electrodes. The electrical conductivity and thermal expansion rates of the were evaluated as the physical properties of the electrode materials in the practical embodiments, with test pieces being cut and shaped into rectangles (3 mm x 3 mm x 15 mm) from the sinter cakes.

0022

The electrodes were manufactured in the following manner after the completion of the mixing described above. First, the desired amounts of organic binder and plasticizer were added to the mixed slurries, the mixtures were again mixed in a ball mill, and the mixtures were adjusted to suitable slurry viscosity by defoaming treatment. mixtures were formed into sheet form by means of a doctor blade and were dried. After drying, the green sheets were pressure bonded to green YSZ sheets (100 μ m) that had been prepared previously, and were sintered for approximately 2 to 3 hours at 1300° C to 1400° C to yield the fuel electrodes. The two-layer electrode structure envisaged by the present invention was prepared by pressure bonding the NiO + YSZ green fuel electrode sheets to YSZ sheets and then by pressure bonding NiO + various basic aggregate sheets onto the tops of the Ni + YSZ sheets and then sintering the sheets in the manner described above. In addition to this method of preparation, Ni + YSZ electrodes were first prepared, Ni + basic aggregate slurries were then applied directly to the electrode surfaces and the electrodes were sintered, whereby it was also possible to obtain a similar two-layered structure. The film thickness of the final single electrode layer so achieved was approximately 100 μ m, the thickness of the Ni + YSZ electrode layer being 50 $\mu \mathrm{m}$ and the thickness of the Ni + basic aggregate electrode layer being 50 μm for a total of 100 μm in the two layered electrode structure. When the Ni + basic aggregate layer was too much thinner than this, it affected the deterioration of the Ni + YSZ layer. Moreover, it should be noted that the performance of the electrodes declined if the Ni + YSZ layer too much thinner than this again. In all cases, the porosity and pore diameter of the electrodes set by reduction to a porosity of 20% to 30% and a pore diameter of 1 μ m to 2 μ m, similarly to the sinter cake described above.

0023

Measurement of the thermal expansion coefficient and electrical conductivity of the fuel electrode material

Table 1 lists the thermal expansion coefficients and electrical conductivities of the fuel electrode materials. The thermal expansion coefficient was the temperature coefficient

of the rate of thermal expansion between 20° C and 1000° C or 1100° C. The thermal expansion coefficient of the YSZ that formed the electrolyte material was 10 x 10^{-6} ° C⁻¹, with the thermal expansion coefficient being found to be close to this value in all cases. In the Ni + YSZ aggregate layer of the prior art, the aggregate itself was the electrolyte and hence, when excess Ni (or NiO) was introduced for reasons of high conductivity, this created the dilemma that the divergence from the listed thermal expansion ratio increased, but because MgAl₂O₄ and CaAl₂O₄ are low thermal expansion materials, even if greater amounts than hitherto of Ni (or NiO) are introduced, it is still possible to match the thermal expansion ratio of the YSZ of the substrate.

0024

Electrical conductivity was measured by the four terminal DC method at 1000° C in an H₂ atmosphere. Naturally, electrical conductivity increases as the amount of Ni is increased, but with the amount of Ni that matches the thermal expansion ratio of the YSZ with MgAl₂O₄ and CaAl₂O₄, an electrical conductivity of not less than 1000 S/cm is achieved. Hence the use of MgAl₂O₄ and CaAl₂O₄ in the aggregate of the fuel electrode enables both the matching of the thermal expansion ratio of the YSZ and high electrical conductivity, which was not possible hitherto. Moreover, while other fuel electrode materials such as MgO·2TiO₂, MgO·ZrO₂ and CeO₂ and so forth impose somewhat different constraints on the scale of fuel cells that can be manufactured, that is on the surface area of the cells and the thicknesses of the films of the constituent materials, they in general exhibit physical properties that do not cause any impediment to the manufacture of cells containing Ni within the range described in Table 1.

0025 Table 1

Table 1			
Basic aggregate	Range of Ni in	Thermal expansion	Electrical
	composition (vol%)	ratio (10 ⁻⁶ ° C ⁻¹)	conductivity (S/cm)
MgAl ₂ O ₃	35 – 60	10 – 12	1000 – 2500
CaAl ₂ O ₃	35 – 60	10 – 12	1000 – 2500
MgO·TiO ₂	35 – 60	11 – 12	0.1 – 2500
MgO·ZrO ₂	20 – 45	11 – 12	0.1 – 2500
CeO ₂	20 – 45	12	300 – 600
YSZ (comparison material)	20 – 45	11 – 12	0.1 – 2500

0026

Structure of electrode

In the following examples, typical compositions of electrode materials were investigated having regard to the results listed in Table 1. Table 2 lists the Ni contents. No particular differences were observed in material and electrical conductivity properties between CaAl₂O₄ and MgAl₂O₄, and as they are similar in crystallography, they have been omitted. As MgAl₂O₄ and MgO·TiO₂ were particularly effective for insulation, they are shown as practical embodiments in the two layer structure.

0027 Table 2

I able Z		h1:
Sample No.	Aggregate	Ni content (vol%)
a	YSZ (comparison material)	35
b	MgAl ₂ O ₄	35
C	Mg·TiO ₂	35

d	Mg·ZrO ₂	35	
е	CeO ₂	35	
f	b/a (two later structure)	35/35	
a	c/a (two later structure)	35/35	
h	d/a (two later structure)	35/35	
i	e/a (two later structure)	35/35	

0028

Tests of resistance to formation of carbon deposits

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the amount of carbon deposit formed (amount of deposit per unit mass contact cracked) and the reaction temperature in the steam reforming reaction on methane. The reaction conditions were S/C = 1, GHSV (space velocity) = 14900 h⁻¹ and reaction time was 20 h. S/C = 1 generally produces rather heavy carbon deposits, but in the case of the practical embodiments, carbon deposits were further forced and the differences in resistance to carbon deposits between the fuel electrode materials were then examined. It will be evident from Figure 2 that no carbon was formed when any of the electrode materials were used at temperatures of not more than 700° C, but that carbon deposits increased rapidly once the temperature exceeded 700° C. However, in all the electrode materials envisaged by the present invention, (b) Ni + MgAl₂O₄, (c) Ni + Mg·TiO₂, (d) Ni + Mg·ZrO₂ and (e) Ni + CeO₂, the amounts of carbon deposits plateaued after a temperature of 800° C was exceeded. On the other hand, (a) Ni + YSZ electrode material of the prior art exhibited a simple increase in the amount of carbon deposits even at a temperature of not less than 800° Thus, whereas carbon was more readily deposited as the temperature was increased in steam reforming reactions with low S/C ratios, the introduction of basic aggregates as envisaged by the present invention led to the restriction of carbon deposits. More particularly, the fuel electrode materials envisaged by the present invention are considered to have been effective in resisting the deposition of carbon in internal reforming from reaction temperatures of between 900° C and 1000° C, which were equivalent to SOFC operating temperatures.

0029

Figure 3 and Figure 4 show scanning electron microscope (SEM) photographs of typical porous fuel electrode layer/YSZ (electrolyte) substrate boundary surfaces after the completion of the internal reforming reaction experiments. The reaction conditions in these cases were similar to those described above except that the temperature was 1000° C. The photograph in Figure 3 shows the boundary surface between (a) the Ni + YSZ electrode layer and the YSZ electrolyte substrate, and Figure 4 shows the boundary surface of (b) the Ni + MgAl₂O₄ electrode layer. Fibrous carbon deposits of approximately 1 μ m were detected in the electrode pores at the Ni + YSZ fuel electrode boundary layer (white portions). However, no such deposits were detected at all at the Ni + MgAl₂O₄ fuel electrode layer boundary surface, with the fresh porous structure prior to reforming having been maintained. For reference, Figures 5 to 7 are SEM photographs of observations of the fibrous carbon detected in the pores of the Ni + YSZ fuel electrodes at high magnifications of 10,000x, 20,000x and 35,000x. The fibrous carbon grew from the Ni electrode particles as nuclei and was generally found to form clusters. Even though at the early growth stage, the deposits of these carbon fibres gradually eliminated the reactive surfaces of the Ni as reaction time extended and accelerated the deterioration of reforming reactivity and electrode reactivity as will be explained below.

0030

Tests on reactivity of fuel electrodes

In this case, cells were prepared as shown in Figure 8 by method described under *Manufacture of fuel electrodes* in order to evaluate the fuel electrode reactivity when internal reforming was performed in the fuel cells. Thus air electrodes 9 and fuel electrodes (Ni + YSZ) 7 were formed on the two sides of the solid electrolyte (YSZ) 6, reforming layers 8 were formed on the fuel electrodes 7 and reference electrodes 10 were attached to portions of the fuel electrodes 7 to provide a three terminal structure. Complex electrically conductive perovskite oxide materials (LaMnO₂) are commonly employed were employed for the air electrode materials, but Pt was employed in this case. The characteristics of the fuel electrodes were evaluated separately from the air electrodes in the three terminal model so that there would be effect from the material of the opposite pole. Pt was employed for the reference electrode, and the atmosphere was maintained constantly as air.

0031

Figure 9 and Figure 10 show the current - potential characteristics of the fuel electrodes when CH₄ and steam were supplied at S/C = 1 (100 cc/min). The electrode potential represented by the horizontal axis is the relative potential between the fuel electrode and the reference electrode, and hence this is equivalent to the balance electromotive force in a single fuel cell in a no load state (current = 0) (-0.9 V in the drawings). This electromotive force is substantially constant regardless of the fuel electrode material and matches the equilibrium reaction constant for the H₂/CO/CO₂/H₂ gas generated in the steam reforming reactions. Figure 9 illustrates the particular properties of each of the fuel electrode materials. It will be evident from the drawing that the highest current density was obtained with the Ni + YSZ fuel electrodes (a) of the prior art and that the overvoltage loss therefrom was the lowest (electrolyte and so forth IR loss was substantially equivalent in each cell). The electrode potential increases as the overvoltage loss decreases, and the output of the cell itself increases. In the drawing, the fuel electrodes using MgAl₂O₄ (b) and MgO·TiO₂ (c) as basic electrode aggregates yielded only approximately half the current density of the prior art. It is considered that this was due to the Ni + YSZ fuel electrodes being highly advantageous in performance as explained under the principles of action. However, as can be seen from Figure 10, the two layer structure fuel electrodes (f), (g), (h) and (i) envisaged by the present invention, being provided with first layers of Ni + YSZ electrodes, provided electrode properties equivalent to those of the prior art, and are considered to have adequately solved the aforementioned problem.

0032

Tests on deterioration of fuel electrode potential over time

Figure 11 is the results of a comparison of the deterioration over time of the fuel electrode potential during power generation by actual internal reforming type fuel cells. The operating conditions were equivalent to the conditions shown for the tests of the fuel electrode reaction properties above, with the fuel electrode potential being the value with an output current density of 150 mA/cm². The Ni + YSZ fuel electrode (a) of the prior art gave a value of approximately 0.6 V at the commencement of power generation, but this gradually declined, and fell to approximately 0.5 V after the passage of 200 hours. On the other hand, the single fuel electrodes using basic aggregates (MgAl₂O₄ and MgO·2TiO₂) (b) and (c) provided low values for current potential of 0.2 V, but this exhibited virtually no deterioration over time. Moreover the single electrodes using MgO·ZrO₂ and CeO₂ aggregates (d) and (e) also exhibited lower initial potentials than did the electrodes of the prior art, but exhibited no fluctuations over time, of 200

hours, provided electrical potentials that were in fact slightly higher than did the electrodes of the prior art. The deterioration over time in the performance of the Ni + YSZ electrodes was shown in the discussion of resistance to carbon deposits above, and was due to the deposition of carbon. On the other hand, the two layer structure fuel electrodes envisaged by the present invention (f), (g), (h) and (i) consistently maintained the electrical potential attained by the Ni + YSZ at the commencement of power generation after the passage of 200 hours. Thus the use of the two layer electrode structure for the fuel electrode, with the first layer being a Ni + YSZ electrode and the second layer being Ni + basic aggregate, as envisaged by the present invention, enables the resolution at once of the problems of the formation of carbon deposits and of high performance of the electrodes in the internal reforming process.

0033

Effects of the invention

The present invention employs a single body with separation type two layer structured electrode in which a Ni + YSZ electrode acts as a electrode reaction active layer and a Ni + basic aggregate electrode acts as a reforming catalyst active layer as described above, which avoids direct contact between the hydrocarbons and the electrode reaction active layer, enables a high level of activation of the electrode reactions between the quasi-reformed hydrogen and the oxygen ions, and in which the fuel cell electrode performance is further able to prevent deterioration in fuel cell performance. Moreover, the present invention takes into account the problem of preventing carbon deposits in the internal reforming electricity generators of the prior art, and is able to improve electricity generating efficiency from generally from 40% to 45% to 50%. Furthermore, the present invention can be applied to fuel cells for the electric power industry that are intended to use coal gasification gas, and is particularly effective in dealing with SOx.

Simplified description of the drawings

Figure 1 is a schematic drawing showing an expanded cross section of a fuel cell being a first practical embodiment of the invention.

Figure 2 is a graph showing the correlation between the steam reforming temperature and the amount of carbon deposited on the electrode material obtained in an actual fuel

Figure 3 is a SEM photograph showing the metallic microstructure at the boundary surface between the Ni + YSZ porous electrode layer and the YSZ electrolyte substrate of the prior art.

Figure 4 is a SEM photograph showing the metallic microstructure at the boundary surface between the Ni + MgAl₂O₄ porous electrode layer and the YSZ electrolyte substrate of a practical embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 5 is a SEM photograph of the metallic microstructure magnified 10,000 times of the porous electrode layer of Figure 3.

Figure 6 is a SEM photograph of the metallic microstructure magnified 20,000 times of the porous electrode layer of Figure 3.

Figure 7 is a SEM photograph of the metallic microstructure magnified 35,000 times of the porous electrode layer of Figure 3.

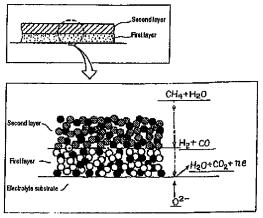
Figure 8 is a cross-sectional drawing of a cell for the evaluation of fuel electrode reactivity.

Figure 9 is a graph showing the electrode characteristics of a single layer fuel electrode. Figure 10 is a graph showing the electrode characteristics of the two layer structured fuel electrodes envisaged by the present invention.



Figure 11 is a graph showing the deterioration over time in the fuel electrode potential in an internal reforming type fuel cell electricity generator.

Figure 12 is a schematic drawing showing the cross-sectional structure of a SOFC.



●: Ni,O: YSZ, ⊚: Basic aggregate

Figure 1

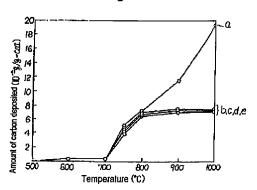
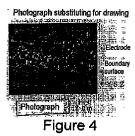




Figure 3



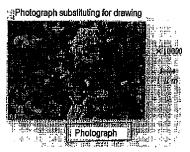


Figure 5

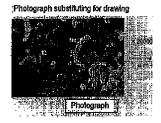


Figure 6



Figure 7

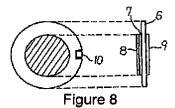


Figure 9

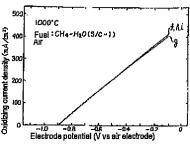
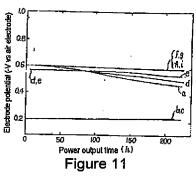


Figure 10



8/12

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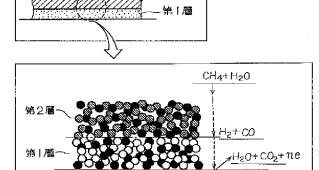
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(54)【発明の名称】 固体電解質型燃料電池の燃料電極

(57)【要約】

【目的】 燃料電極の反応活性層に炭化水素が直接接触 することを防止して準改質水素と酸素イオンの電極反応 を高活性化し、S/C比を低減することができ、かつ、 燃料電極性能の劣化を防止することができる固体電解質 型燃料電池の燃料電極を提供しようとするものである。

【構成】 固体電解質基材の表面に、イットリア安定化 ジルコニア骨材とニッケルまたはその酸化物粒子を含有 する第1の多孔質電極層を形成し、さらに、その表面に 塩基性骨材とニッケルまたはその酸化物粒子を含有する 第2の多孔質電極層を形成したことを特徴とする固体電 解質型燃料電池の燃料電極である。



第2鷹

●:Ni,〇:YSZ, ◎:塩基性骨材

⁰2−

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 固体電解質基材の表面に、イットリア安定化ジルコニア骨材とニッケル金属又はその酸化物粒子を含有する第1の多孔質電極層を形成し、さらにその表面に塩基性骨材とニッケル金属又はその酸化物粒子を含有する第2の多孔質電極層を形成したことを特徴とする固体電解質型燃料電池の燃料電極。

【請求項2】 上記第2の多孔質電極層を構成する塩基性骨材として、 $MgAl_2O_4$, $CaAl_2O_4$, $MgO\cdot 2TiO_2$, $MgO\cdot ZrO_2$ および CeO_2 の群から選ばれる1種以上の骨材を使用したことを特徴とする請求項1記載の固体電解質型燃料電池の燃料電極。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【産業上の利用分野】本発明は、燃料電池の燃料電極に関し、特に、石炭ガス化ガス及び天然ガスを一次燃料とする高温用固体電解質型燃料電池 (Solid Oxide Fuel Cells 、以下SOFCと略記)の燃料電極に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】SOFCは、図12に例示したように固体電解質材料2を挟んで空気電極1と燃料電極4が取り付けられる。なお、3は中間接続子(インタコネクター)、5は多孔性の板状又は管状基体である。固体電解質材料2は酸素イオン導電性を有する8モル%のY₂O。を固溶した安定化ジルコニア(以下YSZと略す)が多用されている。空気電極1は高温の酸化雰囲気においても安定で高い導電性を有するペロプスカイト型複合酸化物が、また燃料電極4にはニッケルあるいはYSZとの熱的整合性を図る上でニッケルとYSZを混合したサーメットが使用されている。さらに中間接続子3にはLa-Cr系ペロプスカイト型酸化物が代表的である。この電池は約1000℃で運転され、空気極側に空気又は酸素を、燃料極側に水素を供給する。

【0003】燃料電池に供給される燃料は、主に水素であるが、電池の大容量化に伴い、石炭ガス化ガスや天然ガス及びナフサの水蒸気改質によって製造された水素が使用される。後者の天然ガス等の水素製造法には、二通りの形式があり、電池系外で改質して水素を供給する外部改質方式と、電池系内で直接改質して発電する内部改質方式とがある。内部改質方式は特に高温用の燃料電池に適したシステムであり、以下のような特徴がある。

- (1) プラントのコンパクト化
- (2)電池熱源を利用した水素製造の高効率化
- (3) 改質反応の吸熱効果による電池冷却負荷能力低減
- (4)発電プラントの高効率化(外部改質に比して)

【0004】ところで、燃料電池の燃料流路となる燃料極室は、主に燃料電極とインタコネクター等の連結材で構成されている。このうち、燃料電極材は、電解質(YSZ)との熱膨張率の整合性を図る上で、YSZ骨材とNi金属のサーメットからなり、そのNi組成は、一般

に30~50 vol%の範囲である。NiとYSZの組合 せからなる燃料電池の燃料電極材料は公知であるが、そ れ以外の実用例は今のところない。

[0005]

【発明が解決しようとする課題】燃料電池の全電池反応 は、電解質中の酸素イオンの移動を介し、以下のように 進行する。

酸素極 : O_2 (g) + 2 e = O^{2-}

燃料極 : H_2 (g) $+O^{2-}$ = H_2 O+2e 全反応 : H_2 (g) $+O_2$ (g) = H_2 O(g) (ここで、eは電子、(g) はガスを示す。)

電池の活性物質は水素と酸素である。酸素極側は、空気中の酸素を利用できるため、特に問題無い。燃料極側も、前記の水素製造法によって精製された純水素を供給すれば特に問題は無い。

【0006】しかし、燃料電池の大規模化に伴い、石炭ガス化ガス及び天然ガス或は都市ガス等の実用燃料が直接利用されると、その燃料水素に含まれる不純物、例えばCH4 等の軽質炭化水素やSOxが燃料電極材を被毒するといった問題がある。特に、内部改質方式により電池系内で天然ガス等の炭化水素を直接改質して発電する場合は、その主成分である残留CH4 によって、燃料電極材を劣化する。これは燃料極中における炭素析出が主な要因である。

【0007】 CH_4 等の軽質炭化水素の水蒸気改質触媒は、これまで耐熱性の α A 1_2 O $_3$ やコージェライト(2MgO·2A 1_2 O $_3$ ·5SiO $_2$)等を担体としたNi触媒が公知であり、またこれに耐炭素析出対策として塩基性のK $_2$ O,MgO等のアルカリ・アルカリ土類金属やRu金属を添加したものが工業的な実用触媒として用いられている。この他の耐炭素析出対策としては、供給スチーム量を化学量論比より過剰にする、いわゆるS/C比(スチーム/カーボン・モル比)の増量やCO $_2$ /C比の増量等の運転上の熱力学的操作が行われている。

【0008】燃料電池の場合も、改質機能の面では燃料電極材に上記触媒活性成分であるNi金属を使用しており、特に問題はないものの、触媒担体に相当する骨材に、酸性のYSZを使用する場合は、比較的炭素が発生し易く、燃料電池の寿命に重大な影響を及ばすといった問題がある。従来の燃料電池における耐炭素析出対策には、以下のような問題があり、その対策にはかなり厳しい制約を受けることになる。

- (1)従来の触媒担体や添加物の導入では熱的整合性が 図れない。
- (2)上記担体や添加物は1000℃以上の高温環境に耐えられず、隣接基材との固相反応により不純な生成物を発生する。
- (3) S/C比の増大は、過剰スチームの潜熱ロスと電池の活物質濃度の低下により電池の熱効率と出力低下を

招く。

【0009】それ故、燃料電池を大規模化するときには、特に内部改質用の燃料電極材に関し、次のような劣化防止対策を講ずる必要がある。

- (1) 隣接基材、特に電解質(YSZ)との熱膨張率の整合性と熱的安定性
- (2) 隣接基材、特にYSZ、インターコネクター、及びNi との耐固相反応性
- (3)高集電機能性
- (4) 水蒸気改質触媒の高活性化と耐炭素析出性
- (5)低S/C比化(→1~2)
- (6)燃料電極性能の高性能化(過電圧の低減化)

【0010】本発明者らは、特願平3-41855号出願において、前項の対策として低熱膨張性でかつ塩基性の $MgA1_2O_4$ や $CaA1_2O_4$ のスピネル化合物を含有する燃料電池の電極材料を提案した。即ち、Ni金属粒子と上記塩基性骨材の組合せからなる燃料電極材料は、骨格材がYSZよりも低熱膨張であるため、<math>NiO(電極製造時は一般にニッケル酸化物になっている)の熱膨張率(13.9×10^{-6} で $^{-1}$)が相殺され、電解質YSZの熱膨張率に合わせることが可能である。また、上記スピネル化合物は、塩基性であることから、耐炭素析出性に優れ、低S/C比でも、安定した水蒸気改質触媒活性と電気化学的触媒作用を維持することができる。また、特願平2-238999告出願において、電極骨材として CeO_2 を用いた上記と同様の電極材料を提案した。これも、上記と同様の効果がある。

【0011】しかし、上記電極骨材における電極性能評価を進めていく過程で、重要な知見を得た。即ち、従来のNi金属とYSZ骨材の組合せによる電極材料は、電池反応の素過程である燃料電極反応(H2+O²-=H2O+2e)に極めて有効に作用するが、YSZ以外の上記骨材、特に殆ど絶縁性に近い骨材の電極性能は、やや従来の性能に劣る傾向がある。そこで、本発明は、従来の電極性能を保持し、かつ前項の耐劣化性要件を満たす固い電解質型燃料電池の燃料電極を提供しようとするものである。

[0012]

【課題を解決するための手段】本発明は、固体電解質基材の表面に、イットリア安定化ジルコニア骨材とニッケル金属又はその酸化物粒子を含有する第1の多孔質電極層を形成し、さらにその表面に塩基性骨材とニッケル金属又はその酸化物粒子を含有する第2の多孔質電極層を形成したことを特徴とする固体電解質型燃料電池の燃料

(改質反応)

電極である。

【0013】本発明者らは、上記知見に基づき上記の劣化防止対策の要件を満たす電極骨材について研究したところ、YSZの熱膨張率に相当する $MgO \cdot 2TiO_2$ と $MgO \cdot ZrO_2$ の複合酸化物も塩基性骨材として有効であることを見い出した。従って、本発明の燃料電極の第2の多孔質電極層を構成する塩基性骨材としては、 $MgAI_2O_4$, $CaAI_2O_4$, $MgO \cdot 2TiO_2$, $MgO \cdot ZrO_2$ 及び CeO_2 の群から選ばれる1種以上の骨材を使用することができる。

[0014]

【作用】図1は、本発明の1具体例である燃料電極の断面を拡大して示した概念図である。この燃料電極は、電解質基材の表面に(Ni+YSZ)構成の第1の多孔質電極層と、(Ni+塩基性骨材)構成の第2の多孔質電極層を形成したものであり、第1の多孔質電極層には電極反応機能を、第2の多孔質電極層には耐炭素析出性の改質触媒機能をもたせ、かつ上記の電極構造を採用することにより、炭化水素が第1の多孔質電極層に直接接触することを防止し、準改質水素と酸素イオンとの電極反応を高活性化し、燃料電極性能さらには燃料電池性能の劣化を防止できるものである。

【0015】本発明では、電解質YSZの熱膨張率(10×10-6℃1)に相当するか、もしくはこれより低熱膨張の燃料電極骨材を採用することにより、これにNiOを従来と同様な範囲又はそれ以上含有させることができ、その結果、電解質との熱膨張率を十分に合わせることが可能となり、熱応力による負荷も殆ど無い。また、1000~1500℃以上の温度において、隣接基材との固相反応による不純な析出物も認められず、熱化学的にも安定な電極材料であるところから、高温熱処理を必要とする燃料電池製作上においても全く問題となることはない。集電性は、導電媒体となるNi金属が従来と同等量もしくはそれ以上含まれているため、良好な金属導電性を有する。それ故、本発明の燃料電極の材料特性は、従来とほぼ同等もしくはそれより優れており、燃料電池の設計上特に支障は無い。

【0016】本発明の最も特徴的な作用は、以下に述べるような低S/C比運転時の内部改質反応における耐炭素析出性と燃料電極の高性能化の維持にある。燃料電池の内部改質反応は、燃料極室内で以下のごとく進行する。なお、ここでは一次燃料をCH4としたが、炭素数2以上の炭化水素においてもその最終反応過程は同様となる。

【0017】このような燃料電池の内部改質反応では、 〔1〕, 〔2〕の改質反応と〔3〕, 〔4〕の電極反応 の逐次反応であり、〔1〕, 〔2〕の反応は基本的に通 常の水蒸気改質反応となんら変わりはない。従って、炭 素生成も一般の改質触媒上で生ずるメカニズムと同様で あって、これを燃料電極に置き換えただけである。その 主な発生メカニズムについては炭化水素の接触分解とC 〇の不均化反応による。特に1000℃の高温では、炭 化水素の接触分解が最も起こり易い。この接触分解は主 としてNi金属表面上に強吸着したCHxの脱水素過程 の結果起こる。吸着種CHxのXの値(<4)が大きい ほど、スチームの反応性に優れ、上記〔1〕の改質に移 行するため、炭素は生成されないが、Xの値が小さいと 炭素が生成し易くなる。更に、YSZのような酸性の骨 材がNi金属に隣接していれば、その炭素生成過程はま すます促進されることになる。しかし、本発明のよう に、塩基性の骨材を導入すれば、塩基性骨材からNi金 属への電子供与作用により、CHxの脱水素反応が緩和 され、スチームとの活性化が促され、その結果、炭素の 生成が抑制される。

【0018】一方、燃料電極反応は、〔3〕,〔4〕のうち特に〔3〕の反応に支配される。その反応活性サイトは、気相/Ni/YSZ三相界面近傍にあり、従って、該三相界面の距離が電極/電解質及び電極膜厚方向のいずれにも存在することが望ましい。これは、従来のNi金属とYSZ骨材の組合せによる電極材料が、電極反応に非常に有効であることを示している。本発明による電極材料を、単独で用いると、その反応活性サイトは、電極/電解質界面の2次元的な領域に制限され、従来よりも反応活性点がかなり減少することになる。このため、電極膜厚方向に対しても、電極反応に有効に作用する膜厚方向だけは、三相界面の距離を確保しておくことが当然に有利であり、従来通りの電極性能を維持することができる。

【0019】このように、本発明の燃料電極は、電極反応機能を有する第1の多孔質電極層の上に、耐炭素析出性の改質触媒機能を有する第2の多孔質電極層を形成することにより、炭化水素が第1の多孔質電極層に接触することがなく、該層における電極反応を高活性化させることができ、燃料電極の劣化を防止できるのである。【0020】

所定量配合し、湿式ボールミルによって分散混合し、均質なスラリーを得た。

【0021】材料物性を評価するために、そのスラリーを十分に乾燥させ、 $100\sim150\mu$ m以下に分級し、これに有機バインダーを添加したものを圧粉成型(又は CIP: Cold Isostatic Press)後、 $1300\sim140$ 0 \odot で所定時間焼結した。焼結体は、多孔質電極の組織を模擬できるように、バインダー添加量、原料粒径、及び焼結温度と時間を変化させることにより多孔率とポア径をそれぞれ $10\sim20\%$ 、 1μ m以下の多孔質体に制御した。なお、水素や CH_4 等の燃焼ガス雰囲気では、NiOが還元されるため、最終的な焼結体の多孔率とポア径は、それぞれ、 $20\sim30\%$ 、 $1\sim2\mu$ mまで増大した。これは、電極製造時も同様である。本実施例では各電極材料の物性として、導電率と熱膨張率を評価しており、その時の試験片は前記焼結体を、直方体(3×3 × $15 \,$ mm)に加工したものを使用した。

【0022】燃料電極の製造は、前記混合終了後、次の 工程によった。まず先の混合スラリーを有機バインダー 及び可塑剤を所定量添加し再度ボールミルで混合した 後、減圧脱泡処理して適正なスラリー粘度に調整した。 これは、ドクターブレード法によって、シート状に成形 され、乾燥された。乾燥後のグリーンシートは、予め準 備したΥSZのグリーンシート(100μm)に圧着 し、1300~1400℃で約2~3時間焼結すること により、燃料電極を得た。本発明に係る電極二層構造の 製作は、上記各燃料電極のグリーンシートのうち、まず NiO+YSZのシートをYSZシートに圧着し続い て、そのNi+YSZシート上にNiO+各塩基性骨材 のシートを圧着して上記と同様に焼結することにより得 た。なお、上記製作法以外にも、予めNi+YSZ電極 を製作した上で、その電極表面にNi+塩基性骨材のス ラリーを直接塗布して焼結することにより、同様な電極 二層構造を製作することができる。このようにして得た 最終的な単層電極の膜厚は約100μmで、電極二層構 造の膜厚はNi+YSZ電極層が50μm、Ni+塩基 性骨材電極層が50μmで計100μmである。なお、 Ni+塩基性骨材層がこれよりあまり薄いと、Ni+Y SZ電極層の劣化に影響してくる。また、Ni+YSZ 電極層もこれよりあまり薄いと、電極性能が低下するの で注意する必要がある。いずれも各電極の多孔率とポア 径は、上記焼結体同様、還元することにより多孔率20 $\sim 30\%$ 、ポア径 $1\sim 2\mu$ m程度となっている。

【0023】(燃料電極材料の熱膨張係数と導電率の測定)表1に、まず燃料電極材料の熱膨張係数と導電率を示す。熱膨張係数は、20~1000℃又は1100℃間での熱膨張率の温度係数である。その時の電解質であるYSZの熱膨張係数は10×10-6℃-1であり、いずれもほぼその熱膨張係数に近い値となっていることが判る。従来のNi+YSZ系骨材層は、骨材自体が電解質

であるため、高導電性の観点からNiO(又はNi)を過剰に導入すると、表記した熱膨張係数よりもますます熱膨張率の差を生じるというジレンマがあったが、Mg $A1_2$ O_4 や $CaA1_2$ O_4 は、低熱膨張材であるため、従来よりも更に過剰のNiO(またはNi)を導入しても基材のYSZとの熱膨張率を一致させることができる。

 以上の導電率が得られることである。このように、Mg $A1_2O_4$ や $CaA1_2O_4$ を燃料電極の骨材に用いることにより、従来不可能であった、YSZ基材との熱膨張率の一致と高導電率を両立させることができた。また、その他のMgO・2Ti O_2 , MgO・Zr O_2 , Ce O_2 等の燃料電極材料も、燃料電池の製作規模、即ちセル面積や各構成材の膜厚によって制約条件は多少異なるが、概ね、表1oNi含有範囲でセル製作上、支障のない物性値を示している。

【0025】 【表1】

塩 基 性 骨 材	Ni組成範囲 (vol%)	熱膨張係数 (10 ⁻⁶ ℃ ⁻¹)	導 電 率 (S/cm)
MgAl ₂ O ₄	35~60	10~12	1000~2500
CaAl ₂ O ₄	35~60	10~12	1000~2500
MgO·2TiO ₂	20~45	11~12	0.1~2500
MgO·ZrO ₂	20~45	11~12	0.1~2500
C e O ₂	20~25	1 2	300~600
YSZ (比較材)	20~45	11~12	0.1~2500

【0026】(電極の構成)更に以下の実施例では、表 1の結果を参考に、各電極材料について代表的な組成に ついて検討した。そのときのNi含有量を表2に示す。 なお、 $CaAl_2O_4$ は、 $MgAl_2O_4$ と材料や電極 特性に特に差が無く、結晶学的にも同類のためここでは

省略した。二層構造電極については、絶縁性の $MgA1_2O_4$ と $MgO\cdot 2TiO_2$ が特に効果があるため、実施例として示した。

[0027]

【表2】

サンプル記号	骨 材	Ni含有量 (vol%)
a	YSZ(比較材)	3 5
b	MgAl ₂ O ₄	3 5
С	М g • 2 Т і О2	3 5
d	Mg·ZrO2	3 5
e	C e O₂	3 5
f	b/a(二層構造)	35/35
g	c/a(二層構造)	35/35
h	d/a(二層構造)	35/35
i	e/a(二層構造)	35/35

【0028】(耐炭素析出性試験)図2にメタンの水蒸気改質反応における反応温度と炭素析出量(単位触媒重量当たりの析出量)の関係を示した。その反応条件は、S/C=1,GHSV(空間速度)= $14900h^{-1}$,反応時間は20hである。S/C=1は、一般に耐炭素析出にはかなり過酷な条件であるが、ここではむしろ強制的に炭素を析出させ、そのときの燃料電極材料間での耐炭素析出性の差を検討したものである。図2から明らかなように、反応温度が700で以下ではいずれの電極材料を使用しても炭素は生成しないが、700でを越えると、炭素の析出は急激に増大する。しかし、電極材料として塩基性骨材を用いた(b)Ni+MgA1

【0029】図3及び図4は、内部改質反応試験終了後の、代表的な多孔質燃料電極層/YSZ(電解質)基材界面の走査電子顕微鏡(SEM)写真を示す。このときの反応条件は、温度1000℃、その他は上記と同様な条件である。図3の写真は、従来の(a)Ni+YSZ

電極層とYSZ電解質基材との界面を、図4は同様に (b) Ni+MgAl₂ O₄ 燃料電極層の界面をそれぞ れ示したものである。Ni+YSZ燃料電極層界面で は、電極多孔質中に約1μm程度の繊維状炭素の析出が 認められる(白っぽい部分)。しかし、Ni+MgA1 2 O4 燃料電極層界面では、そのような析出は全く認め られなく、改質前のフレッシュな多孔質構造を維持して いることが判る。図5~7は、参考までに前記Ni+Y SZ燃料電極の多孔質中で認められた、繊維状炭素を× 10000、×20000、及び、×35000の高倍 率で観察したときのSEM写真である。その繊維状炭素 が、Ni電極粒子を基に核成長しており、一部にクラス ターが形成されていることが判る。この炭素繊維の析出 は、まだ成長初期の段階であるが、反応時間に伴ってN iの活性表面を徐々に失い、後述する改質活性及び電極 反応性の劣化を促すことになる。

【0030】(燃料電極反応性試験)燃料電池の内部改質時における、燃料電極反応性を評価するため、ここでは、前記製造例によって図8のようなセルを作製した。即ち、固体電解質(YSZ)6の両面に空気電極9及び燃料電極(Ni+YSZ)7を形成し、さらに燃料電極7の上に改質層8を形成し、また参照電極10を電解質の一部に取り付けた三端子構造からなっている。なお、空電電極材は、一般にペロプスカイト型の導電性複合酸化物(LaMnO3等)材が用いられるが、ここではPtを使用した。これは上記三端子法により、燃料電極特性を空気電極と分離して評価するためであり、対極側の材質による影響を特に受けない。参照電極には、Ptを使用し、その雰囲気は常に空気中と同様に保持した。

【0031】図9及び図10には、CH』とスチームを S/C=1で供給(100cc/min)するときの燃料電極 の電流-電位特性を示した。横軸の電極電位は、燃料電 極と参照電極間の相対電位であり、従って、無負荷時 (電流=0)の状態では、燃料電池の単セルにおける平 衡起電力に相当するものである(図では−0.9V)。 この起電力は燃料電極材料に因らずほぼ一定で、水蒸気 改質反応で生成した、H₂ /CO/CO₂ /H₂ Oガス の平衡反応定数で得られる値に一致した。図9は、各燃 料電極材料の単独特性を示した。図から明らかなよう に、従来Ni+YSZ燃料電極(a)で、最も高い電流 密度が得られ、その過電圧ロス (電解質等の I Rロスは 各セルともほぼ等しい)が最も低いことが判る。過電圧 ロスが低い程、電極電位は高くなり、電池自身の出力も 増大する。このうち、塩基性電極骨材としてMgA12 O_4 (b)及びMgO・TiO₂ (c)を用いた燃料電 極は、従来の約1/2程度の電流密度しか得られてな い。このことは、燃料電極の性能面で、先の作用原理に より従来のNi+YSZ燃料電極が非常に有利となって いることが判る。しかし、本発明の二層構造による燃料 電極(f), (g)、(h)、(i)では、図10に示 すように、第1層にNi+YSZ電極を設置することで 従来と同等な電極特性が得られ、先の問題は十分に解消 されたことが判る。

【0032】(燃料電極電位の経時劣化試験)図11 は、実際に内部改質の燃料電池発電中における燃料電極 電位の経時劣化について比較した結果である。運転条件 は、上記燃料電極反応性試験で示した条件と同様であ り、その燃料電極電位は出力電流密度150mA/cm² 時 の値である。従来のNi+YSZ燃料電極(a)は、発 電初期において電極電位が約0.6 Vであったが、その 後は徐々に低下し200時間後には約0.5Vまで低下 した。塩基性骨材(MgA1₂O₄, MgO・2TiO 2)を用いた単独の燃料電極(b), (c)では、逆に 電極電位は0.2 Vと低いが経時劣化がほとんど無いこ とが判る。また、 $MgO \cdot ZrO_2$, CeO_2 骨材によ る単独電極(d),(e)も、初期電位は従来電位より も低いものの、経時変化が小さく200時間経過後の電 位は、従来電極よりもむしろ高い電位が得られている。 Ni+YSZ電極性能の経時劣化は、先の耐炭素析出性 試験で示した、炭素の析出が要因となっている。一方、 本発明の二層構造燃料電極 (f), (g), (h), (i)については、いずれもNi+YSZ電極の発電初

期に得られた電極電位がそのまま200時間後も安定に

維持された。このように、本発明による燃料電極を第1

層にNi+YSZ電極、第2層にNi+塩基性骨材とした二層電極構造を採用することにより、内部改質時における耐炭素析出性と電極の高性能化を一挙に解決することができた。

[0033]

【発明の効果】本発明は、前記の通り、Ni+YSZ電極を電極反応活性層とし、Ni+塩基性骨材電極を改質触媒活性層とした一体分離機能型二層構造電極を採用することにより、電極反応活性層に炭化水素が直接接触することは回避され、準改質水素と酸素イオンとの電極反応を高活性化することができ、かつ、燃料電極性能さらには燃料電池性能の劣化を防止できるようになった。また、従来の内部改質式発電では耐炭素析出対策を考慮して、S/C比を3~4で運転していたが、本発明の燃料電極を使用することによりS/C比を1~2まで低減することができ、発電効率を概ね40~45%から50%まで向上させることができる。また、本発明では、石炭ガス化ガスを対象とした電力事業用の燃料電池にも適用でき、特に耐SO×に対しても有効に作用するものである。

【図面の簡単な説明】

【図1】本発明の1具体例である燃料電極の断面を拡大 して示した概念図である。

【図2】実施例で得た電極材料について、水蒸気改質温度と炭素析出量の関係を示したグラフである。

【図3】従来のNi+YSZ多孔質電極層とYSZ電解 質基材との界面の金属組織を示すSEM写真である。

【図4】本発明の実施例である $Ni+MgA1_2O_4$ 多 孔質電極層とYSZ電解質基材との界面の金属組織を示すSEM写真である。

【図5】図3の多孔質電極層について10000倍に拡大した金属組織のSEM写真である。

【図6】図3の多孔質電極層について20000倍に拡大した金属組織のSEM写真である。

【図7】図3の多孔質電極層について35000倍に拡大した金属組織のSEM写真である。

【図8】燃料電極反応性を評価するためのセルの断面図 である。

【図9】単層燃料電極の電極特性を示したグラフであ

【図10】本発明の二層構造の燃料電極についての電極 特性を示したグラフである。

【図11】内部改質方式の燃料電池発電における燃料電極電位の経時劣化を示したグラフである。

【図12】SOFCの断面構造を示した概念図である。

